

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 085352

P R 181210Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2207

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI UAE

AMEMBASSY DOHA QATAR

AMEMBASSY JIDDA SAUDI ARABIA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IRAN

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 MANAMA 00703

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS : MARR, PFOR, BA

SUBJECT : MIDDLE EAST FORCE NEGOTIATIONS AND PRESENCE

REF : (A) MANAMA 692 (NOTAL)

(B) STATE 139873 (NOTAL)

(C) MANAMA 670 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: MINISTER OF STATE FOR CABINET AFFAIRS TELLS ME GOB HAS NO PROBLEMS WITH AGREEMENTS IN PRINCIPLE REACHED IN MIDDLE EAST FORCE NEGOTIATIONS, HAS BEEN DELAYED IN FORMALLY ACTING BY CURRENT CONFRONTATION WITH PARLIAMENT ON SECURITY DECREE AND SHOULD FORMALLY CONCLUDE NEGOTIATIONS BY END OF MONTH. AT SAME TIME HE INDICATED GOB HAS SERIOUS LONG-TERM PROBLEMS WITH CONTINUED U.S. NAVY PRESENCE IN BAHRAIN IN CONTEXT OF EMERGING UNIFIED GULF SECURITY STRATEGY AND IN CONTEXT LOCAL AND NEIGHBORING PUBLIC OPINION INsofar AS FOREIGN MILITARY PRESENCE CONCERNED. END SUMMARY.

1. JUNE 18 I HAD LONG DISCUSSION WITH MINISTER OF STATE FOR CABINET AFFAIRS, JAWAD URRAYED, GENERALLY REGARDED AS PRIME MINISTER'S PROTEGE IN THE CABINET. URRAYED IS A SHIA WITH FAIRLY MARKED PRO-WESTERN TENDENCIES. IN COURSE OF DISCUSSION,

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STATUS OF MIDDLE EAST FORCE NEGOTIATIONS U. S. NAVY PRESENCE

CAME UP.

2. URRAYED ASSURED ME CABINET HAD GIVEN LONG AND CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO MIDDLE EAST FORCE QUESTION BUT IN ITS SUSPENDED DELIBERATIONS HAD NOT YET FORMALLY DISASSOCIATED QUESTION OF CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS FROM BROADER QUESTION OF FUTURE GOB ATTITUDE TOWARD NAVY PRESENCE. CABINET HAD NO PROBLEM WHATSOEVER WITH UNDERSTANDINGS WE HAVE REACHED IN PRINCIPLE IN NEGOTIATIONS AND FULLY UNDERSTANDS THAT THESE ARRANGEMENTS ARE SUPPORTIVE OF GOB'S POLICY OF MAINTAINING U.S. NAVY PRESENCE SO LONG AS IT FEELS IT CAN. HAD SECURITY DECREE ISSUE WITH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY NOT ARISEN, URRAYED FEELS GOB WOULD ALREADY HAVE CONCLUDED NEGOTIATIONS FORMALLY. HE ASSURED ME REPEATEDLY THAT GOB INTENDS TO WRAP THIS MATTER UP BEFORE END OF THIS MONTH.

(COMMENT: URRAYED'S TIMING ESTIMATE APPEARS TO ME TO BE BASED ON TWO OTHER ASSUMPTIONS: (1) THAT SECURITY DECREE FLAP WILL BE DISPOSED OF FOR SUMMER BY JUNE 22 AND (2) THAT PRIME MINISTER WILL RETURN FROM LONDON "ANY MOMENT AND CERTAINLY BEFORE END OF MONTH". WHAT HE IS REALLY SAYING IS THAT MIDDLE EAST FORCE NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE CONCLUDED PROMPTLY ONCE CABINET GETS ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO FOCUS ON THIS QUESTION, I.E., LATE JUNE OR EARLY JULY. END COMMENT)

3. URRAYED SAID, HOWEVER, GOB BY NO MEANS CERTAIN THAT IT CAN INDEFINITELY PERMIT U.S. NAVY TO REMAIN OPERATING OUT OF BAHRAIN, AND IT IS THIS UNCERTAINTY WHICH HAS DELAYED FORMAL DECISION ON WRAPPING

UP NEGOTIATIONS IN VIEW OF CONCERN SOME CABINET MEMBERS THAT USG WOULD INTERPRET AGREEMENT ON NEGOTIATIONS AS SOME SORT OF OPEN-ENDED PLEDGE BY GOB FOR U.S. NAVY TO REMAIN HERE INDEFINITELY. HE ADDED THAT CABINET NOW UNDERSTOOD THAT BY CONCLUDING AGREEMENTS, IT WOULD NOT BE MAKING SUCH A COMMITMENT.

4. URRAYED SAID LATEST ELEMENT IN GOB'S UNCERTAINTY ABOUT LONG-TERM NAVY PRESENCE IS OBVIOUSLY THE CURRENT RUMBLING IN GULF ABOUT A COMMON DEFENSE STRATEGY OR SECURITY PACT, ONE ELEMENT OF WHICH MIGHT BE THE REMOVAL OF ALL FOREIGN MILITARY PRESENCE FROM THE GULF. GOB FULLY AWARE THAT A COMMON GULF DEFENSE STRATEGY IS NOT LIKELY TO DEVELOP SOON BUT IT MUST KEEP ITSELF IN A POSITION OF SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT OF COMMON

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STRATEGY AND RELATING ITS FUTURE ATTITUDE TOWARD U.S. NAVY PRESENCE TO DICTATES OF SUCH A COMMON POLICY SHOULD IT DEVELOP.

5. URRAYED CONTINUED THAT EVEN BEYOND THIS PROBLEM, GOB HAS NEVER BEEN ABLE TO PERSUADE ITSELF CONCLUSIVELY THAT U.S. NAVY PRESENCE IN GULF OPERATING OUT OF BAHRAIN WILL BE IN FUTURE INTERESTS OF BAHRAIN AND OTHER GULF STATES. IN 1971 GOB CONVINCED MIDDLE EAST FORCE PRESENCE SERVED ITS INTERESTS.

TODAY SITUATION HAS CHANGED CONSIDERABLY AND, FRANKLY, GOB FEELS A TECHNICAL-CULTURAL-DIPLOMATIC U.S. PRESENCE IS MORE APPROPRIATE TO PRESENT DAY GULF THAN A MILITARY ONE. IN SHORT, IN GOB VIEW, MIDDLE EAST FORCE MAY BE ON VERGE OF OUTLIVING ITS UTILITY IN SERVING MUTUAL US-GOB INTERESTS IN STABILITY OF GULF. HENCE, THERE HAD BEEN SOME THINKING IN GOB ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF EVENTUALLY REACHING AN UNDERSTANDING WITH USG FOR WITHDRAWAL OF MIDDLE EAST FORCE PRESENCE AT SOME POINT IN FUTURE, "PERHAPS TWO TO FIVE YEARS FROM NOW".

6. URRAYED HASTENED TO ADD THAT COMMENTS ABOVE APPLY TO U.S. NAVY PRESENCE CONSIDERED STRICTLY ON ITS OWN MERITS. GOB VERY MUCH WANTS A STRONGER AND CLOSER RELATINSHIP WITH USG, AND PREFERS TO SEE THIS RELATIONSHIP DEVELOP IN CIVILIAN SECTOR. GOB FULLY AWARE OF BAHRAIN'S INCONSEQUENTIAL PLACE IN THE WORLD AND OF RELATIVE IMPORTANCE WHICH USG SEEMS TO

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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P R 181210Z JUN 75
FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2208
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EXDIS

ATTACH TO NAVY PRESENCE IN BAHRAIN. HENCE GOB, WHATSOEVER ITS OWN ATTITUDES ABOUT NAVY PRESENCE PER SE, IS STRONGLY INCLINED TO PERMIT U.S. NAVY TO REMAIN HERE IF USG WANTS IT TO, SO LONG AS GOB FEELS IT CAN TAKE THE HEAT FROM BAHRAINI PARLIAMENT, PEOPLE, AND ITS NEIGHBORS. GIVEN THIS POLICY, ACCORDING TO URRAYED, GOB WOULD HOPE USG WOULD BE FULLY UNDERSTANDING IF AT SOME POINT IN THE FUTURE GOB ASKED US TO START PLANNING ON

EVENTUAL TERMINATION OF MIDDLE EAST FORCE PRESENCE. HE ASKED INFORMALLY HOW I THOUGHT USG MIGHT REACT TO A FUTURE BAHRAINI REQUEST TO DISCUSS A TERMINAL DATE FOR MIDDLE EAST FORCE PRESENCE.

7. I TOLD URRAYED THE USG STILL FEELS STRONGLY THAT MIDDLE EAST FORCE PRESENCE SERVES INTERESTS OF THE GULF STATES INCLUDING BAHRAIN, GOING OVER FAMILIAR ARGUMENTS RE HOW GULF GENERALLY AND BAHRAIN PARTICULARLY BENEFITS. SPEAKING PERSONALLY, I ASSURED HIM THAT U.S. NAVY PRESENCE IN GULF IS BUT AN ASPECT OF TOTAL U.S. POLICY IN AREA AND HENCE IS EQUALLY AS SUBJECT TO ONGOING REVIEW IN WASHINGTON AS IN BAHRAIN. I COULD GIVE HIM NO REACTION TO HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION OF FUTURE TALKS ABOUT TERMINATING NAVY PRESENCE BUT, IN VIEW OF TERMS OF 1971 AGREEMENT, THIS SEEMED A "NON-ISSUE" SINCE BAHRAIN UNDER AGREEMENT IS FREE AT ANY TIME TO SERVE NOTICE OF TERMINATION. GOB NOT OBLIGATED TO NEGOTIATE END OF U.S. NAVY PRESENCE IF IT
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EVER FELT THAT DESIRE. IN VIEW OF AGREEMENT'S TERMS, ANY SUCH DISCUSSIONS WOULD IN REALITY BE A COURTESY EXTENDED BY THE GOB IN GIVING SOME SORT OF LONG-TERM ADVANCE NOTICE. IF THAT DAY EVER CAME, WE WOULD OF COURSE APPRECIATE THAT COURTESY BUT GOB SHOULD NOT IN ANY WAY FEEL THAT IN CONCLUDING PRESENT NEGOTIATIONS IT IS UNDERTAKING SOME KIND OF PERMANENT COMMITMENT RE U.S. NAVY PRESENCE. URRAYED SAID THAT HE (AND GOB) UNDERSTOOD THIS FULLY AND ASSURED ME ONCE AGAIN THAT NEGOTIATIONS WILL SOON BE CONCLUDED SATISFACTORILY.

8. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO PASS THIS MESSAGE TO SECDEF, CNO, CINCUSNAVEUR AND COMIDEASTFOR.
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